

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 23758 161601Z

43

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00

DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-07 INR-07 NSAE-00 CIEP-01 FAA-00

PM-04 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 SS-15 NSC-05

PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 /082 W

----- 010196

O R 161553Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3987

INFO AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMCONSUL IBADAN

FAA BRUSSELS

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LONDON FOR RAY SEITZ AND AMBASSADOR EASUM

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CGEN, EAIR, CASC, PINS, NI, FR, US

SUBJ: CESSNA AIRCRAFT AND PILOTS DETAINED IN NIGERIA

REF: (A) LAGOS 9371, (B) STATE 201547

1. WE RECEIVED PHONE CALL AUGUST 16 FROM PICHON,
DIRECTOR OF RHEIMS AVIATION, SOLICITING EMBASSY
ASSISTANCE IN SECURING RELEASE OF THREE CESSNA
AIRCRAFT AND PILOTS DETAINED BY NIGERIAN AUTHORITIES
(REFTELS). PICHON HAD BEEN REFERRED TO US BY FRENCH
FOREIGN MINISTRY INASMUCH AS AIRCRAFT ARE UNDER US
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PAGE 02 PARIS 23758 161601Z

REGISTRY.

2. AIRCRAFT WERE ASSEMBLED AND DISPATCHED FROM RHEIMS AVIATION PLANT AT RHEIMS NORTHEAST OF PARIS. PICHON SAID THAT TOTAL ORDER WAS FOR FIFTEEN AIRCRAFT (AND NOT TWELVE AIRCRAFT AS STATED PARA 2 REF B). IN ADDITION TO THE THREE AIRCRAFT NOW DETAINED IN NIGERIA, FOUR MORE AIRCRAFT ARE NOW READY FOR DELIVERY, FOUR WILL BE READY AT THE END OF AUGUST, AND THE LAST FOUR WILL BE READY END SEPTEMBER. PICHON SAID THAT THE THREE AIRCRAFT HAD BEEN FORCED TO LAND AT SHELL/BP FIELD AT UGHELLI, NIGERIA, BECAUSE OF BAD WEATHER BUT HE UNDERSTOOD THEY HAD REQUISITE OVERFLIGHT CLEARANCE. WHEN WE DREW ON REF B INFO SUGGESTING ADVANCE CLEARANCE HAD NOT BEEN RECEIVED, PICHON CONFESSED THAT PERHAPS SUFFICIENT ADVANCE NOTIFICATION HAD NOT BEEN GIVEN TO FERRYING COMPANY OR TO ZAIRIAN AUTHORITIES TO PERMIT FILING OF CLEARANCE REQUEST WITHIN PRESCRIBED TIME LIMIT. IT WAS PICHON'S UNDERSTANDING THAT PILOTS WERE BEING HELD MERELY PENDING PAYMENT OF FINE FOR ILLEGAL LANDING, AND HE SAID THAT PURPOSE OF HIS QUERY TO THIS EMBASSY WAS TO ASCERTAIN REASON FOR CONTINUED DETENTION OF AIRCRAFT AND PILOTS.

3. WE INFORMED PICHON THAT WE HAD ONLY FRAGMENTARY INFO, THOUGH NIGERIAN PRESS REACTION (PARA 4 REF A) SUGGESTED TO US THAT SITUATION MIGHT BE A LITTLE MORE COMPLEX THAN PICHON THOUGHT. WE INFORMED HIM THAT WE WOULD DISCUSS WITH FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTRY AND ALSO REPORT PICHON'S DEMARCHE TO US PROMPTLY TO DEPT. AND AMEMBASSY LAGOS. PICHON STRESSED THAT PURCHASE AND DELIVERY WAS STRICTLY ABOVE BOARD. TO FURTHER EVIDENCE THIS HE PROPOSED PROMPTLY FILE FOR OVERFLIGHT CLEARANCES FOR THE THREE FERRYING FLIGHTS STILL PROGRAMMED FOR THE REMAINING TWELVE AIRCRAFT ON THE SCHEDULE INDICATED PARA 2 ABOVE. WE TOLD HIM WE THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE GOOD IDEA.

4. WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE THUS FAR TO CONTACT CLAUDE-LAFONTAINE OR ANYONE ELSE ON CIVAIR STAFF AT FOREIGN MINISTRY TO DISCUSS MATTER WITH THEM. PICHON TOLD US LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 PARIS 23758 161601Z

CLAUDE-LAFONTAINE HAD INDICATED TO HIM THAT FOREIGN MINISTRY MIGHT BE PREPARED INSTRUCT FRENCH EMBASSY LAGOS TO REASSURE NIGERIAN AUTHORITIES OF BONA FIDES OF FERRYING OPERATION FROM FRANCE. IF DEPT. WISHES US TO URGE FOREIGN MINISTRY TO DO SO PROMPTLY, PLEASE INSTRUCT.
GAMMON

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